DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 089 CG 020 355

AUTHOR Mosley, Norman R.; And Others
TITLE Gender Differences in Same-Sex Friendships and Romantic Relationships.
PUB DATE Apr 87
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Arlington, VA, April 9-12, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Dating (Social); *Friendship; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Attraction; *Interpersonal Relationship; Jealousy; *Sex Differences; *Social Support Groups
IDENTIFIERS *Same Sex Peers

ABSTRACT

An investigation of differences in the friendship patterns of men and of women reported that women appeared to be expressive in their friendship styles while men's same-sex friendships were best characterized as being instrumental. To examine these differences further, a study was conducted which investigated the relationship of friendship and romance. Sixty male and 34 female college students who had a same-sex best friend and who were involved in an exclusive dating relationship completed Rubin's Love and Liking Scale for dating partner and the liking items for best friend, a measure of social support, and a short measure of jealousy in both friendships and romantic relationships. The findings support the idea that women are more intensely involved in their friendships and also in their romantic relationships. Women liked both their best friends and their romantic partners more than men did. Women also reported being more jealous of their best friends than were men and they tended to feel that friends supported them more than did men. Women reported feeling significantly more supported by their romantic partner than did men. Further research into the relationship of friendships and romance is warranted. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED289089

Gender Differences in Same-Sex Friendships and Romantic Relationships

Norman R. Mosley, Margaret S. Gibbs, and Marina Freidlin

Fairleigh Dickinson University

CG 020355

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Margaret S. Gibbs

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Presented Eastern Psychological Association, April, 1987
Arlington VA

Topical Session Preference: Interpersonal Relations, Sex Differences

Problem or Major Purpose: It is often observed that there are differences in the friendship patterns of men and women. A common myth has been to characterize male friendships as being qualitatively better than female friendships (Tognoli, 1980). Research findings over the past decade have emerged which suggest that although men sometimes report more friendships, these friendships are not as close or intimate as those of women (Bell, 1981; Lewis, 1978; Powers & Bultena, 1976). Gibbs, Auerbach, and Fox (1980) found that college-age women were more emotional and less hostile in their friendships than college-age men. Extending their earlier work, the same authors (Fox, Gibbs, & Auerbach, 1985) using an in-depth interview format for three different points in the life span found that women at all three ages were more expressive and empathic in their friendships than men. Men and women talked about the same needs in their relationships, as for instance, altruism, but male friends demonstrated altruism through loaning lawn mowers and starting cars, while female friends demonstrated altruism through emotional support. The investigators concluded that women appear to be expressive in their friendship styles, while men's same sex friendships are best characterized as being instrumental in nature.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate more empirically the gender differences observed by Fox et al. (1985). Predictions based on instrumental/expressive relationship styles were generated not only for same sex friendships, but for romantic relationships as well. Few studies have sought to investigate the relationship of friendship and romance. For instance, studies have not looked

at the possibility of jealousy in friendship relations.

It was predicted that because of the greater intensity and emotional support of women's friendship, women would like their best friend and romantic partner more than men would in similar relationships. It was predicted that women would be more "jealous" of their best friends than would men. Because of women's hypothesized greater emotional support, it was predicted that men would feel more supported by their romantic partner than would women, and that women would feel more support from their best friends than do men.

Subjects: This study contained 94 subjects, 34 females and 60 males who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a large private suburban university.

Procedure: Subjects were recruited with the stipulation that they currently be involved in an exclusive dating relationship and that they have someone of the same sex who they considered to be their best friend. Subjects were tested in large groups, being asked to fill out a variety of measures specific to their current dating partner and best friend. Subjects completed Rubin's 26-item Love and Liking Scale (1973), for dating partner and the liking item for best friends, a 40-item measure of social support (Barrera, Sandler, & Ramsey, 1981), for dating partner and best friend, and a 10-item scale devised by the authors to measure jealousy in both friendships and romantic relationships. The items in this instrument ask for respondents' feelings when they discover their best friend or lover (depending upon instructions) has sought another individual for various kinds of help, support, and activities.

Subjects were asked to fill out several other measures which are not reported here, as they are more relevant to a larger study investigating the role of social support networks in friendships and romantic relationships.

Results: In order to account for experiment-wise error, scales were subject to a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) using gender as the grouping variable. The authors felt justified in examining specific variables in order to account for differences after examination of Wilks' Lambda, $F(9,84)=1.90$, $p=.06$.

Results from univariate F tests generally support the predicted gender differences in friendships and romantic relationships. For example, females appeared both to like their best friend, $F(2,92)=3.92$, $p<.05$ and romantic partner, $F(2,92)=6.67$, $p<.01$ more than men reported liking their best friend and romantic partner respectively. Also as predicted, women were significantly more jealous of their best friend than were men, $F(2.92)=5.13$, $p<.05$. Contrary to predictions, women reported feeling more supported by their romantic partner than did men, ($F(2,92)=5.21$, $p<.05$. There was a trend for females to feel more supported by their same sex best friend than did men, $F(2,92)=2.70$, $p<.10$.

Discussion: The present results support the idea that women are more intensely involved in their friendships and also in their romantic relationships. Women liked both their best friends and romantic partners more than men. Women were more jealous of their best friends than men and tended to feel that friends supported them more than did men.

One finding which emerged that was not predicted was that women feel significantly more supported by their romantic partner than do men. Several competing explanations are possible to account for this finding. It may be that men are less likely to report or admit that their romantic partner provides them with support. Likewise, it is possible that women, based on sex role stereotypes, may need to feel that their partner supports them. Or, if men are more instrumental in their relationships as suggested, perhaps they do provide higher levels of certain kinds of instrumental supports, such as loans, transportation, etc.

The present study extends previous findings about gender difference in friendship into the area of romantic relationships. Further investigation into the interrelationship of friendships and romance would be warranted and probably help clarify both areas.

References

Barrera, Jr., M., Sandler, I., & Ramsey, T. (1981). Preliminary development of a scale of social support: Studies on college students. American Journal of Community Psychology, 9(4), 435-447.

Bell, R. (1981). Friendships of women and men. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 5, 402-417.

Fox, M., Gibbs, M., & Auerbach, D. (1985). Age and gender dimensions of friendship. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 9, 489-502.

Gibbs, M., Auerbach, D., & Fox, M. (1980). A comparison of male and female same-sex and cross-sex friendship dyads. International Journal of Women's Studies, 3, 261-272.

Lewis, R. (1978). Emotional intimacy among men. Journal of Social Issues, 34(1), 108-121.

Powers, E., & Bultena, G. (1976). Sex differences in intimate friendships of old age. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 38, 739-747.

Rubin, Z. (1973). Liking and loving: An invitation to social psychology. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Tognoli, J. (1980). Male friendship and intimacy acros the life span. Family Relations, 29, 273-279.